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**Chicora Foundation, Inc.**

# Memo

To: Mr. Tony Storino, Trustmark Construction Corp.  
From: Michael Trinkley, Ph.D., RPA  
CC:  
Date: March 15, 2019  
Re: Pacolet Elementary School, 150 Hillbrook Circle [formerly South Church St.], Pacolet, SC

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**Tract Identification:** Spartanburg County Parcel 3-33-03-029.00, 3.75 acres (Figure 1).

**Goals of the Investigation:** Because the client wishes to demolish the structure and is subject to Section 106 by virtue of funding sources, the South Carolina Department of Archives and History has requested,

What name the school was constructed as, any changes to the name or assigned grades over time, any architect or builder who was involved in its construction (often noted on building plaques or cornerstones or in District records), significant building alterations or changes over time affecting its architectural integrity (documented with photographs), whether it was a school for black or white students, and any associated period in history or building campaign its construction was associated with (such as the equalization school period about this time (email from Mr. John Sylvest, dated March 1, 2019 to Mr. Tony Storino and others).

**Title Search:** Only a partial title search was conducted, beginning with sale of a 10.98-acre parcel by Maggie M. Lawson, Mary R. Easler, and Olive F. Easler, heirs of G.W. Easler on March 23, 1953 to the Spartanburg County School District for \$3,666.67. A portion of the meets and bounds specifies that the acreage bounded on the Pacolet Cemetery (no effort was made to determine where this is located) (Spartanburg County Register of Deeds, Bk 19-O, pg 466). A derivation clause specified that this is the same parcel sold by S.H. Littlejohn to S.W. Lawson (Spartanburg County Register of Deeds Bk 3-K, pg 760; this deed was not examined). The deed reports that the property is better illustrated by two plats. One was prepared by T.D. Ladshaw on April 20, 1906; the other by J.W. Cunningham on December 27, 1940; neither plat was examined). Additional property was acquired by the School District from John M. Sloan on April 7, 1953, with the acquisition of 0.99a for \$1,000 (Spartanburg County Register of Deeds, DB 19-N, pg 122). An additional 0.27 acre was acquired by the School District for \$1.00 from Grace L. Coleman, Rueben Earle Coleman, and Geraldine Dare Coleman, heirs of K.V. Coleman.

The property was held by the School District until July 24, 1984, when it was sold to Robert L. Chapman, Sr. for \$40,500 (Spartanburg County Register of Deeds, DB 50-Q, pg. 315). The property was identified as 10.78 acres. It is illustrated on a plat prepared by Archie S. Deaton and Associates, dated March 7, 1984 (Spartanburg County Register of Deeds, PB 90, pg 89; Figure 2). Reference to this plat reveals the main parcel of 10.78, on which the school building is situated, as well as two additional parcels, one of 0.23 acres and another of 0.57 acres.

The property passed through several subsequent owners, being sold by Michael McGuire for \$250,000 to the current owner, M & M Enterprises of Pacolet, LLC (Spartanburg County Register of Deeds, DB 89-S, pg. 408).

**Individuals and Organizations Contacted During These Investigations:** Spartanburg County Register of Deeds; Spartanburg County Public Library, Kennedy Local History Room; Pacolet Museum; Pacolet Town Hall (Ms. Tony Kirby); current owner, Mr. Mark Wilson; Pacolet Elementary School (150 State Rd S-42-86, Pacolet); Spartanburg County School District 3 (Ms. Allie Miles, Public Relations, Ms. Wanda Fine, Facilities, Ms. Kathy O'Dell); South Carolina State Library; South Carolina Department of Archives and History; South Carolina Department of Education (Ms. Dana Austin, Mr. Eric Novoa); indices for *The State* newspaper; and other local individuals met during this work (cited as appropriate below).

**Background Concerning “Equalization”:** South Carolina’s school equalization program was implemented in response to the threat of desegregation that resulted in case of *Briggs v. Elliott*. This case challenged school segregation in Summerton, South Carolina and was the first of five cases combined into *Brown v. Board of Education*. Newly-elected governor James Byrnes implemented South Carolina first general sales tax (coupled with a bond issue for quick money) in order to fund a statewide program of school construction, hoping that the funds would equalize the quality of South Carolina’s African American and white schools and shore-up the state’s effort to continue “separate-but-equal” education. The program also authorized funding white schools as an appeasement of South Carolina’s racist attitudes against funding black education (Dobrasko 2005).

This issue was already well formulated in 1950. *The State* newspaper published an account of Spartanburg’s African American citizens appearing before the Education Board and calling their schools, “a disgrace to civilization and a challenge to humanity,” and noting that a recent survey did not find a single African American rated above “poor.” They were careful to note, “we’re not hunting social equality; we want social justice – we want what belongs to us” (*The State*, Columbia, South Carolina, August 25, 1950, pg. 24). *The State*, calling itself, “South Carolina’s Progressive Newspaper,” published an editorial explaining that there were just as many poor white schools as there were poor black schools – and that they money would be used for all schools, a clear effort to break through the race issue and placate the state’s white population (*The State*, Columbia, South Carolina, January 31, 1952, pg. 4).

In 1954, *The State* noted that 54% of the equalization funds to date had gone to African American schools – a surprisingly small “majority” considering the deplorable conditions of black schools. In addition, this money may not have been applied equally across the state. Nevertheless, in the projects announced by *The State*, while only four Spartanburg projects were announced for black schools (there were 13 projects for the white schools), 65.5% of the funds went to these projects. The most expensive, accounting for over \$500,000 went to the black Cumming Street School in downtown Spartanburg (*The State*, Columbia, South Carolina, August 14, 1953, pg 24; April 23, 1954, pg 30; November 24, 1954, pg 1; October 14, 1955, pg 19; February 10, 1956, pg 32).

Dobrasko identifies 13 “equalization” projects in Spartanburg County, including seven white and six black (<http://www.scequalizationschools.org/known-schools.html>). Pacolet Elementary School is not among those listed.

**Pacolet Elementary:** There are two school histories for Spartanburg County School District 3 (<https://www.spartanburg3.org/History.aspx>) and for the Pacolet area (<https://sciway3.net/2001/spartanburg-schools/Pacolet.htm>). Neither are particularly specific.

For example, the history for Pacolet talks of a 1915 school on Highway 176 that burned in 1927. It was replaced by a new school in 1929 (for grades 1-11). In 1955, a new elementary school (the one being studied) was built for grades 1-6, allowing the 1929 building to be used exclusives for grades 7-12. In the mid-1960s, the account specifies that Pacolet Elementary became a primary school (grades 1-3), with grades 4-6 being sent to the Benjamin E. Mays School (which was an African American school). Then, 1979, a new elementary school was built.

The School District history is actually even less precise, beginning in 1950, when school districts were consolidated and Pacolet Mills No. 40 and Pacolet No. 47 were placed in District 9 (today, as a result of further consolidation, District 3). We presume that Pacolet 47 was the progenitor of Pacolet Elementary, but have not identified firm evidence. It jumps to the construction of Benjamin E. Mays (after 1953). This was an entirely black school, educating all of the black elementary school students in Pacolet and all of the district's African American students in grades seven through twelve. By about 1975, Pacolet Elementary School houses grades K-2. In 1975-1976 both a citizen's group and the State Department of Education Office of Technical Assistance and Surveys visited the district's schools and prepared "comprehensive written reports concerning school building needs." We have been unable to locate either of these studies. It appears this may have been the impetus for the new Pacolet Elementary School, which opened to students in K-6 in 1983-1984.

In addition, School District 3 provided portions of several documents that contained histories. One such document is entitled, *Self-Study Pacolet Elementary School, 1974-1976*. This report indicates that,

in 1953, a new elementary school was constructed across from the high school. This new school was to serve the students of Whitestone, Bethedda, and Pacolet in grades one through six. Pacolet Mills students continued to attend Pacolet Mills Elementary. . . . Pacolet Mills Elementary School was closed in 1969 and the other area schools were re-organized to meet the needs of the students. The same reorganization stands today, the only change being the addition of one kindergarten class at Pacolet Elementary. The grade structure of the Pacolet attendance area schools is as follows: I. Pacolet Elementary – Kindergarten-three, II. Pacolet Middle – (previously Mays School) – four-eight, III. Pacolet High – nine-twelve (Anonymous 1976:7-8).

In the 1976-1977 school term, grade 3 was moved to Pacolet Middle School, renamed Pacolet Elementary School. This left the "other school," which we assume is the study location, with only kindergarten through grade 2 and the name was changed to Pacolet Primary School. The report continues that a new facility was begun in 1982 to "accommodate Kindergarten through grade 6" with the consolidated Pacolet Elementary School opened in the fall of 1983 (Anonymous 1981:1)

Littlejohn wrote a slim volume of Pacolet remembrances. In it, he claims the first school building in Pacolet was built in 1915, serving as both a grammar and high school. This school burned (in perhaps 1927 as indicated by a previous history) and he reports that the grammar school students were moved to the Baptist Church. A new school was built on the same location, apparently by at least 1930 (Littlejohn 2003:24).

Another history, edited by Willie Fleming, is identical regarding early history, but notes that in 1955, the Pacolet Elementary School (under study) was built "on land adjacent to the Methodist Cemetery" (Fleming 1984:5). As the population increased, he notes that this school was used as a primary school, with Benjamin E. Mays taking grades 4 through 6. He also noted that the time of publication, a new elementary school was under construction.

While we cannot be certain what school the Pacolet Elementary replaced or where that previous school was located, a school directory for 1951-1952 does include, as a *white* school, Pacolet Elementary (Anonymous 1951:28). The elementary school for black students at that time was Pacolet Mills (Anonymous 1951:42).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> At this time, all schools were separated in the directories by the race of their students. The practice of acknowledging the difference in print seems to have ended in the 1963-1964 school year, although the schools were not yet truly desegregated. This does not appear to have occurred until about 1968, according to one local informant, although he noted it was, at best, partial even then (Mr. Steve Bennett, Spartanburg, South Carolina, personal communication 2019). Further research reveals that as late as 1965, Pacolet Elementary had an entirely white student body and the school district was

We can document that one building was being used for both the elementary and high school in Pacolet as late as 1951-1952 (Annual Report of the County Superintendent, ending June 30, 1952, SCDAH, S152045). At that time, there were 200 white students in the elementary school and 361 white students in the high school, with 7 elementary school teachers. The total value of the school (building, property, and furnishings) was \$260,000.

Between these histories and the Register of Deeds Research, it is certain that the school district acquired land for the construction of a school in 1953. School Board Minutes reveal that the plans for the Pacolet Elementary School were approved on June 2, 1954, with the statement, "These buildings [there were several under consideration, besides Pacolet] are to be constructed 100% from local funds" (Minutes of the Spartanburg county Board of Education, June 2, 1954, SCDAH L42247).

Thus, the Pacolet Elementary School located on South Church Street (today Hillbrook Circle) was white (not black) and entirely built with local funds (using no "equalization" money). The very white Sixth Grade class photo from 1959-1960 is illustrated as Figure 3.

Pacolet Elementary, based on the yearly directories, contained grades 1-6 until about 1982-1983, when the directories indicated that the elementary school contained grades 3-6 and the primary school contained grades K-2 (Anonymous 1982). Unfortunately, the directories provide no physical addresses, although these two grade sets had different phone numbers and different post office boxes, suggesting that two different buildings were used. However, by the following year, Pacolet Elementary housed K-6 and a middle school was located at Pacolet Mills (Anonymous 1983).

The document that potentially might help us understand the physical buildings (the 1975-1976 citizen's group study and the State Department of Education Office of Technical Assistance and Surveys study) cannot be located.

In addition, the document that could potentially resolve additional construction-related questions, such as the name of the architect and the construction firm, is no longer in existence, at least at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. The project files transferred to the SCDAH from the SC Department of Education were sampled and those not filmed were discarded. An examination of the film (S152053, SCDAH) reveals that Pacolet was not fortunate enough to be filmed.<sup>2</sup>

Absent these documents, we are also unable to address the reason(s) that Pacolet Elementary School was eventually replaced. We did identify a clipping from the *Spartanburg Herald-Journal* (March 12, 1983) which explained that the new school would replace "Pacolet Primary School which currently houses student in kindergarten through the second grade and the current Pacolet Elementary School which houses students in grades 3-6). Planning for this new school began in February 1980, "when residents appears before the school board to request the construction of a new building." The architects

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attempting to convince the US Department of HEW that they were integrated based on the movement of black and white teachers, apparently with no effort to integrate students (July 22, 1965 letter from Gattys D. Broome, Superintendent to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, SCDAH S152083).

<sup>2</sup> It is nevertheless possible that this information may be found in a local newspaper. *The State* is indexed and a thorough search failed to reveal any information specific to the Pacolet Elementary School. The *Spartanburg Herald-Journal* is not indexed and it was beyond the scope of this project to scan several years of film in an effort to retrieve this information. It is also possible that there may be files at the S.C. Department of Education that were not transferred to the SCDAH. The Department of Education, however, has required that we file a Freedom of Information Request for the materials. While we have done so, it will take longer that allotted to this project to receive any answer. Finally, it remains possible that Spartanburg County District 3 has materials relevant. However, we were unable to find a staff member familiar with the issues except for one individual, with whom we have been unable to speak. We understand that all district records are stored off-site.



of this new \$4.3 million school were Prather-Thomas-Campbell-Pridgeon, Inc. and the contractor was Beam Construction out of Cherryville, North Carolina (bronze plaque in the lobby of the standing school).

The news article (*Spartanburg Herald-Journal*, March 12, 1983) does indicate that the old school was renovated in 1976.

After the opening of the new Pacolet Elementary School, the old school was sold by the district (see title research) and the new owner again renovated it, this time to operate a nursing home. Major modifications included the construction of an addition at the front to expand office space, the conversion of space for showers, the modification of bathrooms, and extensive subdivision of classrooms. It was also likely at that time that the glass block windows were modified.

After the nursing home, the property was acquired by a local firm and is today used for hydraulic pump repairs. Numerous internal doorways have been removed, as have walls. Minimal or no maintenance has resulted in extensive building damage.

**Other Extant Schools in Pacolet:** Today, the Pacolet Elementary School (150 State Rd S-42-86) is standing and in use (Figure 4). The Benjamin E. Mays School is today a Middle School (850 Sunny Acres Rd, Pacolet) with some portions of the original buildings retained (Figure 5). The high school has been demolished and only one heavily modified building is still standing (Figure 6).

**Description of the Old Pacolet Elementary School:** The Pacolet School shows the influence of the International style, with a rectangular plan, flat roof, lack of ornamentation or decorative details, and ribbon windows. Some architects referred to this as a “contemporary idiom” with natural lighting and natural ventilation (Herrick and Conrad 1952:331, 333). Another period author touted the economy and flexibility of this architecture, focusing on “poured-concrete slab for low-rise structures, lightweight steel frames with exposed trusses and joists . . . and expanses of glass (Ogata 2008:568). Other characteristics found at Pacolet are the open corridors and non-load bearing partitions (characterized by the ready movement of walls for the subsequent nursing home and, today, the industrial facilities). The adaptability of the one-story school built with a rigid frame, with classrooms on one or two sides of the corridor, and continuous fenestration along the entire wall was promoted by the 1949 *Guide for Planning School Plants* (National Council on Schoolhouse Construction. Plant Guide Committee 1949). Many of these details are further discussed by Dobrasko (2005).

The Pacolet School, as revealed by Figures 7-16 exhibits many of these characteristics. It is an L-shaped building containing an office, classrooms, bathrooms, kitchen, and a cafeteria, with a flat roof. The number of bays or classrooms can no longer be readily identified because of extensive interior modifications. The window sections suggest perhaps six on the front, with an additional two in the wing. The rear of the school has been so heavily altered that it is no longer possible to identify original window sections. A boiler room and storage area is thought to exist under the cafeteria/kitchen area, based on an exterior concrete stairway. Interior classrooms and the cafeteria all have open truss roofs.

The main entrance consists of three solid wood door opening outward, each with an overhead glass transom. The cafeteria entrance on the front of the building exhibits two similar doors. There is a concrete covered breezeway linking the main and cafeteria entrances. This sidewalk continued down the front of the building to an entrance at the end of the building set into an alcove.

The exterior finishes are facing brick in a common bond pattern. Window sections have sills of cast stone. The windows are metal casement, opening inward, with glass blocks in the upper two-thirds of the openings. Interior walls are CMUs, with metal doorframes and solid wood doors.

There is no surviving evidence of associated exterior athletic fields, parking, driveways, or other landscaping.

Alterations to the exterior of the school include covering most of the glass block window segments (one is exposed in the rear and one is exposed in the cafeteria). A wood covered office extension has been

added to the front façade of the building. Alterations in the rear of the structure are very extensive, including the addition of industrial doors. The roof has been penetrated by several exhaust stacks for interior industrial activities. As previously mentioned, exterior features, such as playgrounds, fields, landscaping, access roads, and parking are no longer present. There are two recent additions to the front of the building, including a gazebo.

We have documented that the school underwent modifications in 1976, but have not been able to determine what these modifications entailed (or if they affected interior or exterior features).

There has been little maintenance of the structure since it was a nursing home and this has led to conditions such as roof leaks and corrosion of the roof trusses (visible in the cafeteria). Original exterior doors and hardware are damaged, dilapidated, or failing. Light fixtures are uniformly damaged or missing.

**Assessment of the Old Pacolet Elementary School:** Most fundamentally, Pacolet Elementary School is not an Equalization School. It was used entirely by white students and was paid for using entirely local funds.

Nevertheless, Dobrasko, in her Multiple Property Documentation Form for Equalization Schools provides detailed criteria for assessment. She notes that the “official, formal entrance to the school should be retained and used.” At Pacolet, this entrance is extant, although its condition is deteriorated and blocked inside and out. The “roofline should remain flat or slightly pitched.” At Pacolet, the original roof is present, but altered by the addition of several industrial vents. She specifies that “additions . . . shall be clearly defined and should not overwhelm the historic school [and] should be on the side or the rear of the building.” At Pacolet, the most notable addition is on the front and, although not verified, we believe the existing wall was removed at the time of the addition. Dobrasko also specifies that, “original signage should be considered.” The Pacolet School lacks signage.

There is no question that the Pacolet School is ineligible for nomination to the National Register as an equalization school. In addition, I do not believe the Pacolet School retains sufficient integrity even for consideration as representative of school architecture of the period.

This review and assessment has substantively complied with the requests for information outlined by Mr. Sylvest in his March 1, 2019 email to Mr. Tony Storino.

**Data Gaps:** I have noted in several areas where it has been impossible to acquire information that might assist in the assessment. These are briefly itemized here.

1. It has been impossible to obtain any pertinent information from the S.C. Department of Education without filing a Freedom of Information request. The results of the filled request have not yet arrived.
2. It has been difficult to obtain pertinent information from the Spartanburg County School District
3. Records are filed offsite and I have not been able to gain access. They have mailed some information, which is incorporated in this study. It is uncertain what else may be present.
3. While it is likely that local newspapers can supply additional information, they are not indexed and the project did not allow the time or funds to scan the several years necessary in order to identify articles.
4. One of the best potential sources for details concerning the construction of the Pacolet Elementary School was not retained by the S.C. Department of Archives and History in a sampling program (S152053).
5. I did not have the time to examine SCDAH S370001, South Carolina Education Survey Committee, 1948.

## Sources Cited:

Anonymous

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- 1976 *Self-Study Pacolet Elementary School, 1974-1976*. Spartanburg County School District 3, Glendale, South Carolina.
- 1981 *Pacolet Elementary School*. Spartanburg County School District 3, Glendale, South Carolina.
- 1982 *School Directory of Spartanburg County*. County Board of Education and the Spartanburg County Education Association, Spartanburg, South Carolina.
- 1983 *School Directory of Spartanburg County*. County Board of Education and the Spartanburg County Education Association, Spartanburg, South Carolina.

Dobrasko, Rebekah

- 2005 Upholding "Separate by Equal:" South Carolina's School Equalization Program, 1951-1955. Master's thesis, Department of History, University of South Carolina, Columbia.

Fleming, Willie, editor

- 1984 *The History of Pacolet*, vol. 1. Town of Pacolet, Pacolet, South Carolina.

Herrick, John H. and Marion J. Conrad

- 1952 School Plant. *Review of Educational Research* 22(4):329-337.

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- 2003 *Pacolets I Have Known*. Np, np.

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- 1949 *Guide for Planning School Plants*. National Council on Schoolhouse Construction, np.

Ogata, Amy F.

- 2008 Building for Learning in Postwar American Elementary Schools. *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 64(4): 562-591.

## Interviews:

Ms. Reese Schoonover, Spartanburg County School District 3 [remembers school, grades 1-6, doesn't remember whether black or white]

Ms. Kathy O'Dell, Spartanburg County School District 3 [was not able to get a return call]

Mr. Steve Bennett, Spartanburg [remembers school and integration]

Ms. Tony Kirby, Pacolet Town Hall [remembers school, definitely white, approx. date of construction as 1954, nursing home afterwards]

Mark Wilson, current owner [doesn't really remember school, nursing home most recently, pointed out what was left of Pacolet High School – building behind Hardee's]

Ms. Allie Miles, PR, Spartanburg County School District 3 [provided name of former principal, R.B. Wheeler, Sr. who I called, no call back; he did provide Ms. Miles with some materials which was mailed and is incorporated in this report]

Ms. Wand Fine, Facilities, Spartanburg County School District 3 [no information, no files]

Ms. Dana Austin, SC Department of Education, Records [she referred me to Eric Novoa, formerly in charge of records]

Mr. Eric Novoa, SC Department of Education, Records Analysis [Office of Technical Assistance and Surveys no longer exists; he advised me to file a FOI request, which was done]

**SCDAH Files Reviewed:**

S 15053, State Department of Education, Division of Administration and Planning, Project Files [files sampled by SCDAH, examined microfilm, Pacolet was not chosen for retention and is presumed destroyed]

S 152124, State Department of Education, Division of Development, School Surveys of Physical and Organizational Needs [found that the periods covered excluded original construction of old Pacolet and the survey done by both citizens and state]

S 152045, State Department of Education, Division of Finance and Operations, Annual Reports of County Superintendents [examined, cited above]

S 152087, State Department of Education, Office of Technical Assistance and Survey, Federal Survey Files [examined, contains only financial surveys for census]

L 42247, Spartanburg County, Board of Education, Minutes [examined, cited above]

S 152083, School District File [contains only correspondence regarding forced desegregation, cited above]



Figure 1. Portion of the Spartanburg County GIS showing the study tract.

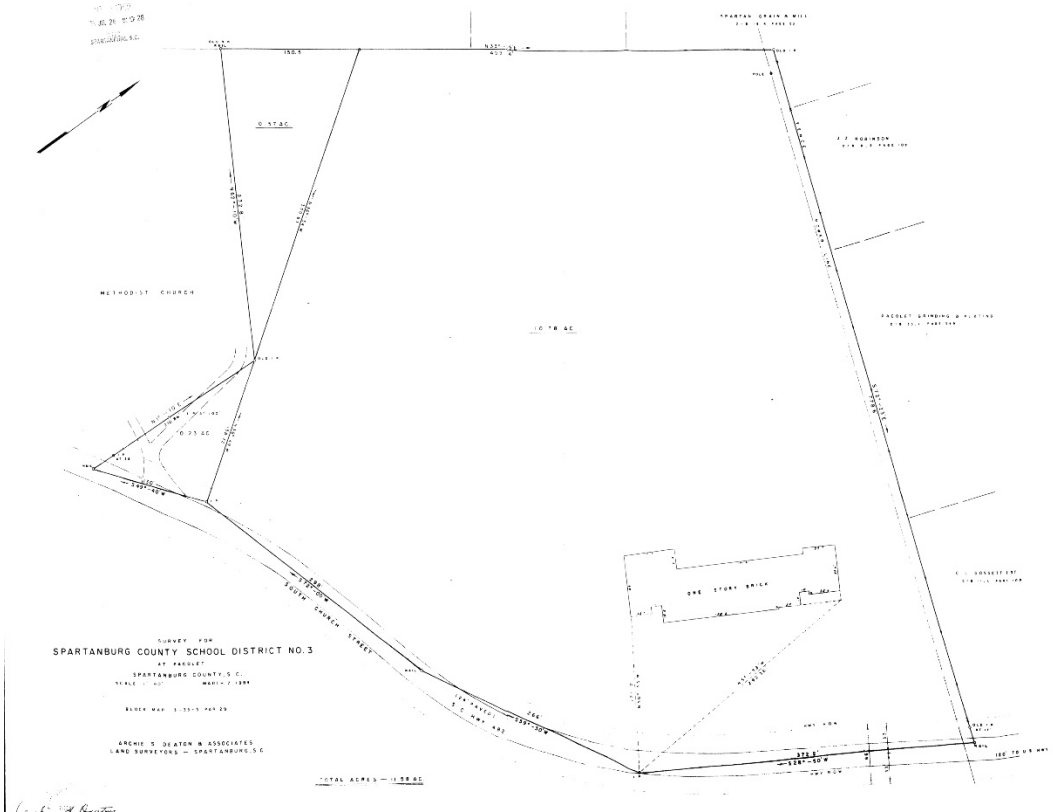


Figure 2. 1984 Deaton and Associates Plat showing the School District property and school building (Spartanburg County Register of Deeds, PB 92, pg 89).





Figure 3. 1959-1960 Sixth Grade class at Pacolet Elementary (<https://pacoletmemories.com/1959-1960photos.html>).



Figure 4. Current Pacolet Elementary School.





Figure 5. Benjamin E. Mays School, today a middle school.



Figure 6. The sole remaining structure associated with the high school, built in 1929 and demolished in 1976.





Figure 7. Slightly oblique view of the front of the old Pacolet Elementary School, looking southwest.



Figure 8. View of the main entrance.





Figure 9. View of the Cafeteria entrance to the right of the main entrance.



Figure 10. View of the classroom extension to the left of the main entrance.





Figure 11. Oblique view of the school, looking north.



Figure 12. Oblique view of the rear of the school, looking south-southwest.





Figure 13. Close-up showing the metal casement windows and covered glass blocks above.



Figure 14. View of the addition to the front of the school, immediately left of the main entrance.





Figure 15. View of the classroom corridor, looking southwest from the main office area.



Figure 16. View of classroom showing glass block windows, now largely covered.



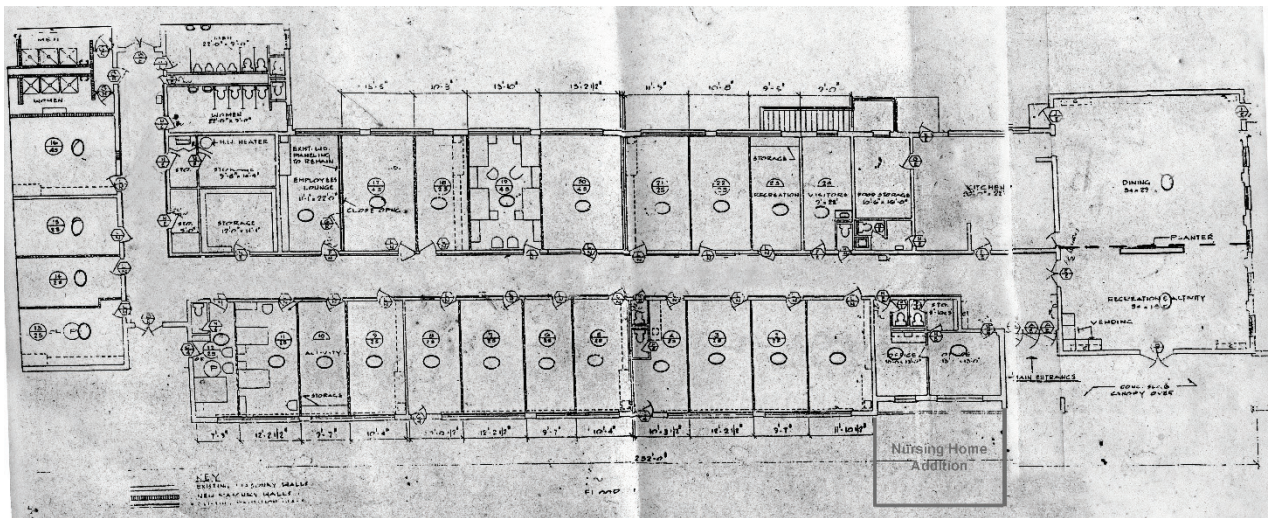


Figure 17. Only identified plans showing the building as a nursing home.



Figure 18. Portion of the Pacolet (1983) and Pacolet Mills (1983) topographic maps showing referenced shhools.